

Decoding the Structural Pathways from Brand Personality to Purchase Intention in the Electric Vehicle Sector

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ABSTRACT

As the electric two-wheelers (E2Ws) market grows increasingly competitive, understanding the drivers of consumer adoption remains a critical commercial and environmental priority. This study utilizes a structural equation modeling approach to examine how distinct brand personality traits influence consumer trust and subsequent purchase intentions. Our structural model demonstrates that consumers evaluate E2Ws branding traits selectively rather than uniformly. Specifically, Competence, Sincerity, and Sophistication emerge as significant positive drivers of Brand Trust. Conversely, Excitement and Ruggedness are important but show insignificant relation with Brand Trust; they fail to mitigate the functional and safety concerns inherent to new technology. Finally, the path from Brand Trust to Purchase Intention is highly positive and significant, confirming that trust serves as the central mechanism translating symbolic brand appeal into a final buying commitment. These insights offer valuable strategic direction for E2Ws marketers aiming to convert green brand identity into tangible market share.

Keywords: Electric Two-wheelers, Brand Personality Traits, Brand Trust, and Purchase Intention.....

INTRODUCTION:

The automotive sector is experiencing a major transformation globally fueled by environmental demands, strict regulatory policies, and rapid advancements in electric vehicle technology (Zheng, 2023). In densely populated urban areas, electric two-wheelers (E2Ws)—such as e-scooters and electric motorcycles—have become pivotal players in promoting sustainable short-range transport, especially across congested developing nations (Jiang & Wei, 2021). Yet, despite heavy government financial incentives and the growth of charging networks, manufacturers still face major roadblocks when trying to turn general consumer curiosity into actual buying behavior (Moons & De Pelsmacker, 2012). Conventional internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles continue to leverage decades of consumer habits and brand allegiance. Conversely, E2Ws stand as a highly disruptive innovation that consumers still view with skepticism due to lingering fears over battery life, driving range, safety protocols, and the durability of the manufacturers themselves (Cui et al., 2023).

As a result, marketing E2Ws effectively requires looking beyond basic functional metrics such as top speed, operating costs, or battery size. In markets where technology is rapidly changing and highly commoditized, symbolic and psychological branding cues become the chief tools for standing out from competitors (Aaker, 1997; Keller, 1993). Modern consumers rarely evaluate electric vehicles purely on utility; rather, they see these products as reflections of their individual ethics and social identity (Jiang & Kim, 2026). The psychological connection is heavily driven by brand personality, which refers to the distinct human traits attributed to a specific company or product range (Aaker, 1997). While a distinct brand personality can trigger an immediate emotional bond, its real value lies in its power to

ease consumer anxieties about new technology and establish lasting market confidence (Dwivedi & Merrilees, 2025).

Because of this, Brand Trust acts as a vital psychological link during high-stakes, eco-conscious purchasing decisions (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). A compelling brand personality might spark early consumer interest, but a solid foundation of structural trust is what ultimately converts symbolic attraction into an actual purchase (Laroche et al., 2012). While past literature extensively documents the practical hurdles of EV adoption—including initial price premiums and the scarcity of charging stations (Tai et al., 2024)—there remains a distinct lack of empirical research exploring how symbolic, relationship-oriented factors drive the adoption of electric two-wheelers.

This study bridges an existing research gap by proposing and testing a comprehensive framework. Specifically, it investigates the collective impact of Aaker's (1997) five brand personality facets (competence, excitement, ruggedness, sincerity, and sophistication) on buyer purchase intention within the E2W market. Furthermore, this paper isolates how Brand Trust functions as an essential mediator within these pathways. By applying Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), this study offers a rigorous statistical analysis of these interconnected, concurrent relationships. Ultimately, these insights provide both a theoretical contribution to the field of green consumer behavior and practical positioning tactics for E2W brand managers working in highly competitive sustainable mobility markets.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Symbolic Consumption and Brand Personality

The theoretical foundation of this research rests on symbolic consumption theory and the concept of self-congruity, both of which argue that consumers purchase products for their communicative, symbolic value rather than just their

practical utility (Sirgy, 1982). To measure these symbolic definitions, this paper applies Aaker's (1997) foundational brand personality scale, which uses five distinct facets to evaluate a brand's human like traits:

Sincerity: Characterized by genuine honesty, ethical practices, and transparency.

Excitement: Defined by a daring, highly spirited, creative, and cutting-edge technological image.

Competence: Represented by dependability, technical security, intelligence, and proven performance.

Sophistication: Conveyed through a sense of luxury, prestige, elegance, and aesthetic appeal.

Ruggedness: Marked by structural strength, toughness, and outdoor durability.

Within the electric two-wheeler (E2W) sector, these specific personality types are forged by different market positioning strategies. For instance, established legacy manufacturers migrating toward electric line-ups typically emphasize Sincerity and Competence, while new, disruptive EV startups lean heavily into Excitement and Sophistication to define their identity (Jiang & Wei, 2021). Self-congruity theory suggests that when a buyer detects harmony between their own self-image (either actual or aspirational) and the symbolic identity of an E2W brand, their mental assessment of that brand shifts in a highly positive direction (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013). Ultimately, this psychological alignment minimizes post-purchase regret and strengthens both consumer-brand relationships and purchasing behavior (Malhotra, 1988).

2.2 Brand Personality Dimensions and Brand Trust

Essentially, brand trust is a consumer's confidence that a product will deliver on its promises, functioning safely, consistently, and exactly as promoted (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Because electric two-wheelers (E2Ws) are an evolving technology often associated with high performance risks, cultivating this trust is an absolute necessity for long-term market survival (Cui et al., 2023). Every individual facet of a brand's personality plays a distinct role in constructing this sense of consumer trust. First, sincerity speaks directly to what buyers expect regarding corporate social responsibility, green transparency, and honest warranty terms (Sung & Kim, 2010). When an E2W manufacturer projects a sincere image, consumers feel safer from corporate exaggeration regarding actual battery life, which significantly reinforces emotional trust (Louis & Lombart, 2010). Second, Competence connects to the engineering quality, technical capability, and proactive safety features built into the vehicle (Aaker, 1997). Given that EV issues like battery fires and sudden software errors are genuine user worries, a brand identity anchored in technical competence directly eases these systemic fears and builds cognitive trust (Munuera-Aleman et al., 2003).

In a similar vein, Excitement can foster trust by framing the manufacturer as a highly agile, forward-thinking pioneer capable of providing cutting-edge over-the-air software updates and industry-leading battery efficiency (Moons & De Pelsmacker, 2012). Sophistication adds credibility to the consumer relationship by connecting the vehicle with premium manufacturing materials, high-end design aesthetics, and elite social status (Dwivedi & Merrilees, 2025). Lastly, Ruggedness implies physical toughness, mechanical resilience, and structural durability under rough

city road conditions—qualities that are absolutely vital for two-wheelers navigating unpredictable environments (Aaker, 1997). Consequently, this research posits that all five dimensions of brand personality serve as critical, foundational drivers of brand trust.

H01 = Sincerity has a significant positive influence on Brand Trust.

H02 = Ruggedness has a significant positive influence on Brand Trust.

H03 = Excitement has a significant positive influence on Brand Trust.

H04 = Sophistication has a significant positive influence on Brand Trust.

H05 = Competence has a significant positive influence on Brand Trust.

2.3 Brand Trust and Purchase Intention

In highly complex, tech-disruptive markets such as the electric two-wheeler (E2W) sector, brand trust acts as a crucial psychological bridge that transforms positive consumer attitudes into concrete buying behaviors (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Relationship marketing theory defines brand trust as a buyer's psychological readiness to depend on a company's integrity and its demonstrated capability to deliver safe, consistent performance (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). Conversely, purchase intention reflects the subjective likelihood or deliberate readiness of a consumer to buy a particular brand or product down the line (Zeithaml, 1988). The theory of reasoned action suggests that these intentions to act are strongly influenced by cognitive trust cues. These indicators work by systematically reducing the financial and functional risks perceived by the consumer (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

When exploring new green-mobility options like E2Ws, consumers navigate a complex array of technical uncertainties, including concerns over battery degradation, low resale valuation, sparse charging networks, and overall vehicle safety (Cui et al., 2023; Zheng, 2023). In an environment marked by such structural uncertainty, cultivating brand trust is highly practical. It functions as an internal risk-mitigation mechanism that lowers the buyer's mental burden and diminishes transactional friction (Mayer et al., 1995). Once an E2W firm builds deep consumer trust, buyers are able to look past systemic engineering anxieties and focus instead on the long-term benefits of the vehicle (Jiang & Wei, 2021).

Data-driven structural modeling across the wider electronics and EV sectors repeatedly confirms a strong, direct positive link stretching from brand trust to buyer intention (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Louis & Lombart, 2010). Because buying an E2W demands a major financial commitment and directly impacts personal safety, individuals will seldom commit to a purchase decision without solid bedrock of trust in the brand (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). Consequently, this study hypothesizes that a consumer's trust in an E2W manufacturer acts as a direct, positive determinant of their definitive intention to buy.

H06 = Brand Trust has a significant positive influence on Purchase Intention.

2.4 Brand Trust and Purchase Intention

Although the various facets of a brand's personality lay a strong symbolic groundwork, their immediate impact on final buying choices is frequently constrained by how risky consumers perceive the new technology to be (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Acting as a pivotal bridge in the consumer relationship, brand trust effectively transforms abstract, symbolic characteristics into actual purchasing actions (McKnight et al., 2002). Based on the commitment-trust theory, trust minimizes a buyer's transactional vulnerability and acts as the primary engine driving long-term behavioral commitments (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

In the electric two-wheeler (E2W) market, a buyer might deeply appreciate a highly dynamic or premium brand identity, yet still hold back from buying if they harbor doubts about long-term battery health or the company's post-purchase maintenance network (Zheng, 2023). Brand trust essentially filters the cognitive and emotional impressions sparked by a brand's personality, neutralizes anxieties regarding technological risks, and creates a reassuring psychological space that fosters a distinct willingness to buy (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). Data-driven structural models in related technology industries regularly confirm that brand trust serves as an essential partial or full mediator linking initial brand image attributes to ultimate consumer behavioral outcomes (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Laroche et al., 2012).

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the structural pathways from brand personality traits to purchase intention, mediated by brand trust, within the electric vehicle (EV) sector. The structural model maps the five dimensions of Aaker's (1997) Brand Personality Scale Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication, and Ruggedness are chosen as exogenous variables. Brand Trust serves as the mediating variable, while Purchase Intention is the primary endogenous variable. The target respondents were users of electronic two wheelers and data was collected using purposive sampling from 190 customers. After the editing and improvements in the data SEM was applied using SPSS, AMOS on 177 responses. To determine the adequacy of the sample size for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the ratio of observations to measured variables was evaluated. The measurement model comprises 7 latent constructs with 3 items each, resulting in

21 observed indicators. According to Hair et al. (2019), a sample size between 150 and 200 is sufficient for covariance-based SEM models involving seven or fewer constructs with at least three items per construct and high item communalities. Thus, $N = 177$ is deemed adequate for testing the measurement and structural models. Monte Carlo simulation studies by Wolf et al. (2013) demonstrate that a sample size between 150 and 175 provides sufficient statistical power (≥ 0.80) and unbiased parameter estimation for confirmatory factor models with seven constructs and three indicators per factor. Bentler and Chou (1987) recommended a minimum ratio of 5 cases per measured item. With 21 total items across 7 constructs, the current sample size of $N = 177$ yields a ratio of 8.4:1, exceeding the required minimum threshold. Therefore, $N = 177$ meets the empirical standards for robust model estimation. To evaluate brand personality, this study utilized a modified fifteen-item scale based on Aaker's (1997) model, which assesses five core dimensions: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. Brand trust was assessed via a three-item scale derived from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). Finally, purchase intention specifically regarding electric vehicles was gauged using a three-item metric adapted from Zeithaml et al. (1996).

4. Analysis

For the measurement model Chi square value is 249.678, degree of freedom is 168 and the likelihood ratio (CMIN/DF) is 1.486 which is acceptable. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is the measure of difference between implied and observed variance - covariance matrix, the value of RMSEA is 0.053 suggest a good fit model. The Comparative Fit Index is 0.961 which is excellent. TLI - Tucker-Lewis Index is 0.952 which is excellent for the model. A lower Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMS) value less than 0.08 suggest very little residual or unexplained error in the correlation matrix. The SRMR value is 0.0427 is an excellent result for the model. The goodness of fit (GFI) for the measurement model is 0.885 which falls slightly below the traditional 0.90 threshold, though several researchers argued that values above .80 are sufficient to indicate an acceptable model in early researches and in complex researches related to business and management (Cole, 1987; Doll et al., 1994).

4.1 Measurement Model

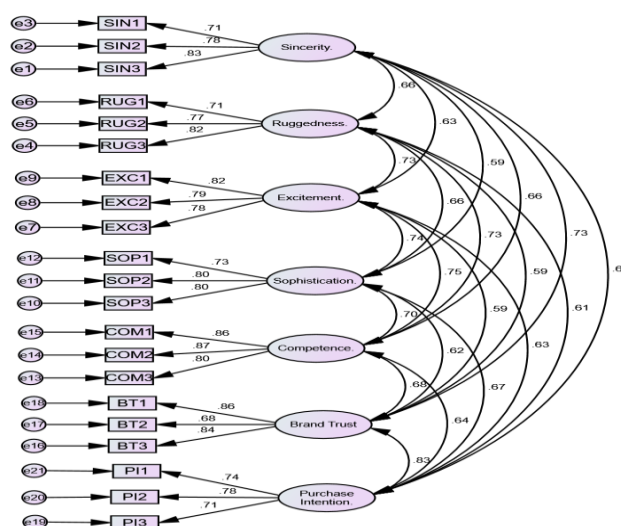


Image 1. Measurement Model Including Five dimensions of Aaker's Brand Personality Brand Trust and Purchase Intention

Table 1. Fit Indices and Obtained Value of Measurement Model.

Category	Fit Indices	Recommended Value	Source	Obtained Value
Likelihood Ratio	(CMIN/df)	≤ 3.0	Tabachnick & Fidell (2007)	1.486
Absolute Fit	RMSEA	≤ 0.06	Hu & Bentler (1999)	0.053
	SRMS	≤ 0.08	Hu & Bentler (1999)	0.0427
Incremental Fit	CFI (Comparative Fit)	≥ 0.95	Hu & Bentler (1999)	0.961
	TLI (Tucker-Lewis)	≥ 0.95	Hu & Bentler (1999)	0.952
Parsimony	PCFI	> 0.60	Ahmed et al. (2024)	0.769

Composite reliability is measured as shown in table number 2 and is above the 0.70 benchmark and thus construct reliability is achieved (Hair et al., 2018). Convergent validity was estimated using Average Variance Extracted and was found higher than 0.50 for all the constructs and thus convergent validity is present for the current study (Hair et al. 2018).

Table 2. Reliability, Composite reliability, and Convergent validity of all Five dimensions of Aaker's Brand Personality, Brand Trust and Purchase Intention

Items		Loadings	Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Sincerity	SIN1	.708	<0.001	0.819	0.602
	SIN2	.780	<0.001		
	SIN3	.834	<0.001		
Ruggedness	RUG1	.709	<0.001	0.771	0.589
	RUG2	.771	<0.001		
	RUG3	.820	<0.001		
Excitement	EXC1	.822	<0.001	0.838	0.632
	EXC2	.786	<0.001		
	EXC3	.778	<0.001		
Sophistication	SOP1	.726	<0.001	0.818	0.600
	SOP2	.796	<0.001		
	SOP3	.800	<0.001		
Competence	COM1	.864	<0.001	0.882	0.713
	COM2	.868	<0.001		
	COM3	.801	<0.001		
Brand Trust	BT1	.863	<0.001	0.841	0.641
	BT2	.684	<0.001		
	BT3	.843	<0.001		
Purchase Intention	PI1	.742	<0.001	0.789	0.554
	PI2	.776	<0.001		
	PI3	.715	<0.001		

According to Henseler et al. (2015) Heterotrait - Monotrait (HTMT) ratio is the gold standard for measuring discriminant validity far superior than Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings. In the current study since all the HTMT ratios are less than 0.85, discriminant validity is established. The table number 3 shows the HTMT ratios for discriminant validity.

Table 3. Heterotrait - Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio for Measuring Discriminant Validity.

HTMT							
PI							
BT	0.83126						
COM	0.64436	0.68695					
SOP	0.67451	0.62604	0.69964				
EXC	0.63152	0.58698	0.74798	0.74312			
RUG	0.61143	0.58971	0.73333	0.65976	0.73312		
SIN	0.63181	0.73766	0.6597	0.59125	0.63349	0.66594	
	PI	BT	COM	SOP	EXC	RUG	SIN

4.2 Structural Model

Structural equation model was created using AMOS software to test the relationships between Aaker Brand Personality model, Brand Trust and Purchase Intention. Chi square value is 259.49, degree of freedom is 172 and the likelihood ratio (CMIN/DF) is 1.509 which is acceptable. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is the measure of difference between implied and observed variance - covariance matrix, the value of RMSEA is 0.054 suggesting a good fit model. Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is 0.958 which is excellent. TLI - Tucker-Lewis Index is 0.95 which is excellent for the model. A lower Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value less than 0.08 suggest very little residual or unexplained error in the correlation matrix. The SRMR value is 0.0454 is an excellent result for the model. The goodness of fit (GFI) for the structural model is 0.88 suggesting an acceptable model considering the overall consistency of the other indices and sensitivity of GFI to the sample size (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). The squared

multiple correlation for Brand Trust is 0.614 and for Purchase Intention is 0.675. This shows that 67.5% of variance in Purchase Intention is accounted for by Brand Trust and 61.4% of variance in Brand Trust is accounted for by the five Aakers Brand Personality traits.

H01 = Sincerity has a significant positive influence on Brand Trust.

H02 = Ruggedness has a significant positive influence on Brand Trust.

H03 = Excitement has a significant positive influence on Brand Trust.

H04 = Sophistication has a significant positive influence on Brand Trust.

H05 = Competence has a significant positive influence on Brand Trust.

H06 = Brand Trust has a significant positive influence on Purchase Intention

. Table 4. Hypothesis Testing and Model Fit Indices of Structural Model

Hypothesized Relationship	Standardized Estimates	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
Sincerity -> Brand Trust	0.404	4.025	<0.001	Positive & Significant
Ruggedness -> Brand Trust	-0.007	-0.061	0.951	Negative & Insignificant
Excitement -> Brand Trust	0.015	0.116	0.907	Positive& Insignificant
Sophistication -> Brand Trust	0.234	2.039	0.041	Positive & Significant
Competence -> Brand Trust	0.247	2.138	0.033	Positive & Significant
Brand Trust -> Purchase Intention	0.946	8.299	<0.001	Positive & Significant
R Square				

Purchase Intention	0.675			
Brand Trust	0.614			
Model Fit				
CMIN/df= 1.509, RMSEA = 0.054, SRMS = 0.054, CFI = 0.958, TLI =0.95, PCFI = 0.785				

Supported Hypotheses:

Sincerity, Competence, and Sophistication → Brand Trust.

Brand Trust → Purchase Intention.

Unsupported Hypotheses:

Excitement and Ruggedness → Brand Trust.

Sincerity, Sophistication and Competence are significant in generating impact on brand trust. It suggests that customers may be interested in excitement and ruggedness traits in a brand but sincerity, sophistication and competence generate more impact towards brand trust.

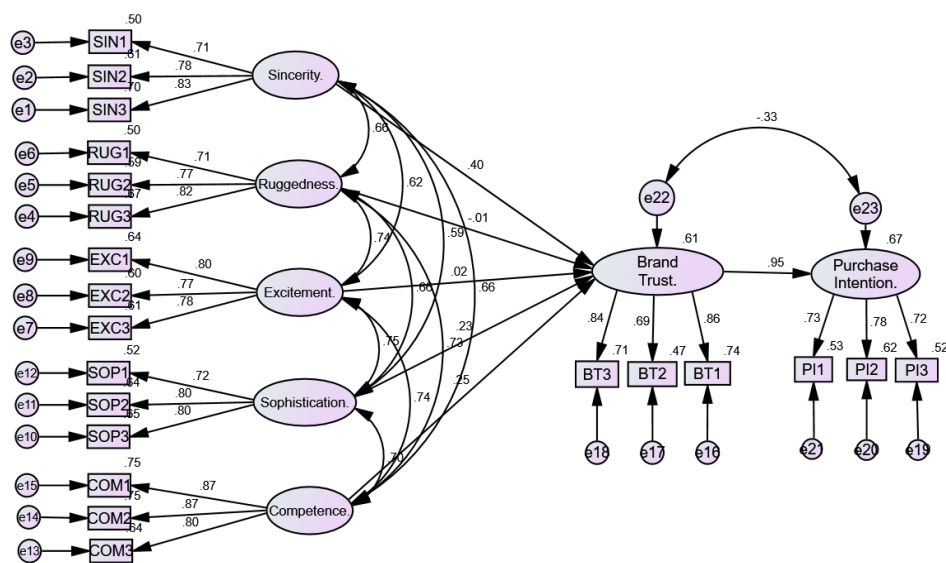


Image 2. Structural Model Showing the Relationship between Five dimensions of Aaker's Brand Personality Brand Trust and Purchase Intention

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This research explored the structural mechanisms connecting brand personality to buyer intentions in the electric vehicle (EV) industry. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), this study investigates the impact of Aaker's (1997) five dimensions of brand personality on consumers' intention to purchase, specifically examining how brand trust acts as a mediating variable.

5.1 Main Empirical Findings

Our structural model shows that consumers evaluate EV branding traits selectively rather than uniformly:

Significant Drivers of Trust: Competence, Sincerity, and Sophistication act as significant, positive drivers of Brand Trust. In a highly volatile technology market, buyers value engineering reliability (Competence) and honest communication regarding battery performance and green metrics (Sincerity). Concurrently, the impact of Sophistication indicates that consumers perceive EVs as premium, high-status symbols.

Non-Significant Pathways: Conversely, Excitement and Ruggedness showed no significant relationship with Brand Trust. Bold or adventurous imagery may spark interest, but it fails to alleviate the functional and safety concerns tied to new EV tech.

The Path to Purchase: The link from Brand Trust to Purchase Intention is highly positive and significant, confirming that trust is the central mechanism translating symbolic brand appeal into a final buying commitment.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

This study refines symbolic consumption and self-congruity theories within green tech markets. It demonstrates that identity alignment alone cannot drive adoption when functional risks are high. While consumers might favor "daring" or "rugged" brand images, the financial and operational uncertainties of EVs require bedrock of trust. By highlighting this mediation, our study aligns with commitment-trust theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), proving that symbolic traits must first generate cognitive and emotional security to successfully trigger transaction intent.

5.3 Managerial Insights

For EV industry professionals, these empirical results offer clear positioning strategies:

Focus on the Core Attributes: Marketing strategies must lead with Competence and Sincerity. Companies should prioritize verified battery health, clear warranty structures, and safety standards over superficial technological hype.

Emphasize Premium Design: Because Sophistication builds consumer trust, automakers should combine advanced engineering with high-end, sleek aesthetics to elevate the brand's perceived status and credibility.

Reduce Secondary Branding: Avoid dedicating heavy resources to "rugged" or "exciting" narratives, though these characteristics are important but may not foster the consumer trust necessary to drive sales in today's sustainable mobility market..

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